

Tips for Teaching Through Delegation



Although the obstacles to delegating effectively can seem insurmountable, learning to be an expert at it is really a matter of observing a few simple rules. Approaching delegation as a learning opportunity pays off in the long run with improved learning and increased retention.

Take your time

Delegate only when you have time to teach and the employee has time to learn. Have a sit-down, face-to-face meeting with the person to whom you are delegating. Give clear and accurate instructions and allow time for their questions, comments, and concerns.

Delegate in bite-size pieces

Do not try to overload the employee with information during the first session. As a general rule, delegate the job 20% at a time. When the employee can perform 80% of the task unsupervised, it's time to delegate the whole job and let it go.

Watch your language

Try to avoid phrases like "Could you do me a favour" or "I really hate to ask but..." Personalizing and apologizing like this tends to backfire as it gives the impression that your request is above and beyond the call of duty. Be sure to explain what you are delegating, when it needs to be done, how you want it completed and why you chose him or her.

Add on a task only when you can subtract one too

It's not fair to keep piling work on to your star employees and expect them to be enthusiastic about it. When delegating, estimate the amount of time the new task will take and let the employee pass an equally weighted task on to someone else. Alternately, you might discuss how to eliminate tasks that are no longer important or relevant to the job.

Be available

It is rarely advisable to stand over employees' shoulders while they work, but it is absolutely appropriate to be accessible for their questions. Even better, encourage them to come to you for direction. Frequent check-ins will make both of you more comfortable in the long run.

Delegate recurring tasks

Employees are much more likely to improve their performance if they have several opportunities to do the same job. When a one-time-only task is delegated, what is learned can be easily forgotten. What gets repeated gets remembered; so whenever possible choose things that the employee will be responsible for daily, weekly or monthly.